

Specific Learning Disability Definition

"Specific Learning Disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Criteria for Initial Determination of Eligibility

A child has a specific learning disability when:

- A. the child does not achieve commensurate with his or her age and ability levels in one or more areas listed in B below if provided with learning experiences appropriate for the child's age and ability level;
- B. the child displays observable characteristics that indicate deficits in basic psychological processing. The team finds a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the following areas. A severe discrepancy is defined as 1.5 standard deviation between cognitive and academic areas.

Basic reading skill
Reading comprehension
Written expression
Mathematics calculation

Mathematics reasoning
Listening comprehension
Oral expression

Determining dysfunction in the central nervous system or a psychological processing deficit is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain by current psychological and/or medical tests. Therefore, psychological processing deficits are presumed and inferred through observation of behavior. Such behaviors include difficulty in academic and learning tasks, a discrepancy between potential and achievement, an uneven growth pattern, and the exclusion of other causes;

- C. the child's severe discrepancy and processing deficits are not PRIMARILY the result of:
 - 1) a visual, hearing, or motor disability;
 - 2) mental retardation;
 - 3) emotional disturbance; or,
 - 4) environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

Professional Judgment

[A child may also be deemed eligible if the child displays, through formal and informal assessment, evidence of a learning disability even though a severe discrepancy is not present as defined in B above. In such cases, sufficient data must be presented in the evaluation report to document the existence of a specific learning disability.]

A child who does not display a discrepancy of at least 1.5 standard deviations as defined in B above, may nonetheless be deemed to have a specific learning disability if 1) the child meets the other criteria of this rule; and 2) based upon professional judgment and review of formal and informal assessments, the evaluation team concludes that a severe discrepancy exists. In such cases, sufficient data must be presented in the evaluation report to document the existence of a specific learning disability.